



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection and Permanency	Effective Date: 8-5-2019
Volume:	IV	Out of Home Placement	
Chapter:	B	Resource Care	Revised Date: 9.16.19
Subchapter:	6	Management of Resource Family Homes	
Issuance:	350	Social Media Policy for Children and Youth Living in Resource Family Care	

Purpose:

This issuance establishes policy and procedures for access and use of the internet, social media, and electronic devices that connect to the internet for children, and youth adults in resource family care. Social media includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Instagram, Snapchat, texting, calling, on-line games, or other internet social networks not previously mentioned or yet developed.

Authority:

- “Prevent Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families” Act, H.R. 4980
- N.J.S.A. § 30:4C-26(c) Authority of Caregiver to Approve or Disapprove
- N.J.S.A. §§ 9:6B-4(e) Child Placement Bill of Rights Act
- N.J.A.C. § 3A:51, Manual of Requirements for Resource Family Parents

Policy:

A) Children and Youth in Placement Having Access to the Internet

It is the policy of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) to ensure that every child and youth placed through the agency has access to the same activities and opportunities as his or her peers who are not in resource family care. This includes having access to the internet, social media, and electronic devices that allow them to safely connect with people and the community. This policy seeks to establish general parameters that support age-appropriate access and use while also being mindful of the need to:

1. Keep children and youth safe;

2. Respect the skills and judgement of resource family parents; and
3. Respect caregivers and the role of the biological or adoptive parents in the lives of their children.

B) Possession and Access to Electronic Devices

DCF supports the use of electronic devices and access to the internet by a children and youth. Resource family parents shall determine access and use of these devices and the internet for a child or youth in accordance with the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards of New Jersey and related requirements below. Exercising this standard includes, among other things, considering the age and maturity of the child or youth, as well as the views of the child or youth, and any special needs. The resource family parent will communicate rules related to the access and use of electronic devices to the child or youth and consult with the CP&P Worker when there is conflict, or there is a need for assistance.

1. Maintenance Cost of the Child's Cell Phone or Other Electronic Devices

If it is determined that a child or youth will have access to a cell phone or other electronic devices, the monthly maintenance cost associated with the cell phone of the child or youth or other electronic device(s) is the responsibility of the paying party. If the paying party of the cell phone or electronic devices ceases to continue payment, the resource family parent may opt to provide a cell phone or electronic devices for the child or youth and absorb the associated cost or make arrangements in consultation with the case planning team. Do not use Flex funds to purchase cell phones or cell phone minutes (see The Flexible Fund Policy [CP&P-IX-F-1-400](#)).

2. Inventory of Electronic Devices

Upon placement of a child in a resource family home, the Worker takes a complete inventory of the electronic devices the child is bringing into placement or acquired after entering placement. Record the child or youth's electronic devices using CP&P [Form 26-52](#), Contact Sheet. Place the list in the family's case file, located in the Local Office supervising the family.

3. Communication with Parent, Attorney, and Worker

The resource family parent provides access to a phone and a private location within the resource family home for the child or youth to contact his or her parent(s), sibling, law guardian, and Local Office Worker. This must be provided regardless of the house rules or parameters established for use of devices or social media.

C) Access and Use of Internet and Social Media

1. Setting House Rules and Parameters

The resource family parent develops and implements house rules, for a child or youth in resource family care, regarding access and use of the internet

and social media through electronic devices. Develop these rules consistent with rules the resource family parent has for his or her own child or youth. Include older children in this conversation.

2. Develop reasonable rules and parameters considering the following:

- Age and maturity of the child or youth;
- Whether access is needed for academic instruction;
- The experience of the child or youth before entering the home;
- Special needs of the child or youth (online instruction or therapy, services or programs used via the internet that are determined to be appropriate or helpful;

3. Developing Appropriate and Safe Internet Strategies for a Child or Youth in Placement

The resource family parent considers, as appropriate, and depending on the needs, capacity and circumstances of the child or youth, strategies to help keep the child or youth safe and develop good social media and internet skills. These strategies may include using devices in a common area, use of the device's parental control features, and asking the child or youth to share his or her passwords, when appropriate. Include these strategies in the house rules or parameters and share with the child or youth to promote trust and safety. The resource family parent initiates safety measures on electronic devices when there is a viable threat or identified safety concern for a child or youth and discusses these issues with the Worker.

4. Promoting Safe Use and Responding to Safety Concerns

Consider the safety needs of the child or youth when developing house rules and parameters. Explain to child or youth the risks related to the potential consequences of posting private and identifiable information online and risks related to victimization or bullying by others.

D) Maintaining Online Communication between the Child and His or Her Family

A child or youth in resource family care shall maintain communication with family and friends. When appropriate, the resource family parent encourages and supports positive relationships between the child and youth and his or her family and friends using social media, (e.g., texting, Face-time, etc.). The resource family parent and the child or youth develop and execute appropriate guidelines for using social media based on the age of the child or youth, psycho-social development, and appropriateness of the relationship with the other party.

E) Safety and Child Welfare Concerns Related to Social Media Use

The resource family parent initiates safety measures on electronic devices when there is a viable threat or identified safety concern for a child or youth in placement. Such threats or concerns include, but are not limited to:

- A person making viable threats against the child or youth or resource family parent;
- Anyone using the Global Positioning System (GPS) on the child or youth's phone or device to track the child or youth's location to gain access to the child or youth;
- An inappropriate internet relationship with an adult(s) or other party; and
- Bully or bullying behaviors.

The resource family parent addresses suspicious or threatening behavior with the child or youth and reports it to the Worker. If the behavior places the child or youth at imminent risk, the resource family parent reports the situation to the local police and files a complaint, as warranted, and notifies the Worker.

Safety measures include but are not limited to the strategies listed in (C)3.

Open communication between the child or youth and the resource family parent on issues that directly impact the child is encouraged by the Division. The resource family parent and child or youth discuss and develop a plan to address social media safety concerns prior to instituting or increasing safety measures on electronic devices operated by the child or youth.

Key Terms (Definitions):

- Electronic devices means portable or stationary devices used to transmit or receive media or communications. Such devices include but are not limited to: cell phones, tablets, desk or laptop computers, fitness tracking devices or smart watches, and streaming services and devices.
- Parental controls “(of a computer, mobile cell phone or digital television server) means having a feature that enables parents or other adults to control children’s access to material that is not suitable for them.” Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries
- Reasonable and prudent parent standard means the standard of care provided to a child which is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and well-being of the child, encourage the emotional and developmental growth of the child, and promote the best interests of the child.

Related Information:

- [CP&P-IX-F-1-400](#), The Flexible Fund Policy
- [FAQ - Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard Guidance for Child Welfare Professionals](#)
- [FAQ - Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard \(RPPS\)](#)

[Guidance for Caregivers in Resource Family Homes](#)

- [FAQ - Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard: Information for Youth and Young Adults](#)
- [FAQ - Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard Guidance for Parents and Legal Guardians](#)

Policy History:

- 9.16.19 – Added Frequently Asked Questions.
- 8-5-2019 - new policy